

TRUST AND DISTRUST AS DISTINCT CONCEPTS. A FRAMEWORK FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

ZAUFANIE I NIEUFNOŚĆ JAKO RÓŻNE KONCEPCJE. RAMY POJĘCIOWE DLA SEKTORA PUBLICZNEGO

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Abstract. In the global rankings of generalized trust, Poland occupies a low position. Polish people are rather distrustful. Analyses of trust endeavour to isolate (distinguish) distrust. Distrust is more and more often defined as a separate definition, not only as the opposite to trust. Analysis of distrust seems indispensable, in particular with reference to the public sector. Public sector organizations point out at building trust. The article is an attempt to systematize the concept of distrust through analysis of trust and separation of basic differences in both concepts (trust and distrust) was made. A great significance of distrust towards entities (organizations) of the public sector may be observed. The objective of the article and research was to prepare a theoretical basis for the studies on distrust in the Polish public sector. The paper includes theoretical frameworks, which may be used for a detailed research on the role and significance of distrust in the public sector. The paper is based on the literature review and generally available data.

Keywords: trust, distrust, public sector

Streszczenie. W światowych rankingach uogólnionego zaufania Polska zajmuje niską pozycję. Polacy raczej są nieufni. W analizach dotyczących zaufania podejmuje się próby wyizolowania (rozróżnienia) nieufności. Nieufność coraz częściej jest definiowana jako odrębny termin, nie tylko jako przeciwieństwo zaufania. Niezbędna wydaje się analiza nieufności, szczególnie w odniesieniu do sektora publicznego. Organizacje publiczne zwracają uwagę na budowanie zaufania. Celem artykułu i badań jest opis ram teoretycznych do analizy nieufności w sektorze publicznym. Artykuł jest oparty na przeglądzie literatury oraz ogólnodostępnych danych.

Słowa kluczowe: zaufanie, nieufność, sektor publiczny

Introduction

In the global rankings of generalized trust, Poland occupies a low position. Polish people are rather distrustful. An all-Poland survey shows that more than two thirds of Poles (69%) declare the principle of far-reaching caution and suspicion in their relations with others (Centre for Public Opinion Research, 2018).

The contemporary social world has a high degree of uncertainty. It results from the fact that people are not able to predict behaviour (actions) and choices made by other people. We are not able either to

predict other people's actions or control them. It results from several factors. Firstly, we are not able to collect full information on other people's actions, or on preconditions of these actions. Secondly, people undertake decisions independently; they are free, which means that they can act in an unpredictable way. Thirdly, people undertake actions based on their beliefs and interpretation of past experiences, the forms of which we are not able to (fully) predict. (Sztompka 2007, p. 64-65; Koźmiński, Latusek-Jurczak, p. 32-33).

In the literature we may indicate papers that show a contrary understanding of the concept of trust and

distrust. Various processes that underlie the formation of two independent constructs are analysed. Trust favours maintenance of stability through continuation of the existing relationships. While, distrust forces (provokes) people to think again over the assumed objectives and methods of their achievement. (Lewicki, Mc Allister, Bies, 1998). There are three models of defining distrust. Distrust may be treated in contrast to trust, but also as a separate, independent concept (construct) or as two independent concepts with spectra that do not overlap conceptually.

Material and methods

This article assumes a hypothesis that distrust and trust occur in the public sector simultaneously. The first stage of building trust should consist not only in knowing the essence of trust but also understanding distrust. A definition of distrust, description and distinction of factors that cause distrust towards public entities may constitute the basis for building trust. In the Polish distrustful society it is difficult to build trust when conditions of existence of distrust are not recognized. However, characterization of the concept of distrust towards various objects (on various planes) in the public sector seems indispensable. Recognition of distrust may become a basis for building trust towards public entities. The concept of distrust was defined in the article in relation to the definition of trust. Then, factors shaping distrust were distinguished.

A theoretical analysis was supplemented with generally available data on the level of trust and distrust in Poland and entities operating in the public sector (the concept of public finances should mean the public entities and, in particular, units of all administrative levels (territorial local government units, governmental sector units, but also such entities as hospitals and public health sectors, public schools (on every education level). The article emphasises the meaning of distrust in building trust in the public sectors under Polish conditions.

An attempt to systematize the concept of distrust through analysis of trust and separation of basic differences in both concepts (trust and distrust) was made. A great significance of distrust towards entities (organizations) of the public sector may be observed.

The objective of the article was to prepare a theoretical basis for the studies on distrust in the Polish public sector. The paper includes theoretical frameworks, which may be used for a detailed research on the role and significance of distrust in the public sector.

Results and discussion

Trust is presented as a recipe for many problems concerning the relations inside organizations as well as influence of a particular organization on the surroundings. Trust is an object of analysis in independent scientific fields, i.e. economy, management, psychology, sociology. Many factors which influenced the increase of interest in the problem (issue) of trust are indicated. Most often trust is analysed with respect to studies on the social capital, system changes in the world order, growth of market networking and the increasing competitiveness between companies on the global market. A positive approach to the problem of trust dominates literature. Trust is analysed as welfare on which one should work and aim at increasing its value. Analyses that emphasise the significance of trust at a general level "Trust is treated as an important element of life quality" (Sztompka 2007, p. 303) may be indicated. Simultaneously even greater attention is paid to drawbacks and virtues that originate in trust, as well as to distrust. (Lewicki et al., 1998; Wicks et al., 1999; Hardin, 2004).

Trust is significant in the conditions of uncertainty. It is defined as a "*sedative*" (Beckert, 2006) for uncertainty (Koźmiński, 2004, p. 13-34). Trust reduces uncertainty and enables actions despite it, assuming favourable results (Nooteboom, 2002). Trust reduces the perceived risk and uncertainty related to conduct (actions) taken by other people reducing at the same time the need of monitoring and control. Trust is sometimes called *the state of mind*, which does not pertain to knowledge, being at the same time knowledge that enables engagement in relationships (Möllering, 2006, p.106). Trust and distrust are sometimes called heuristic decision making (Kramer, 2006,) which help us make decisions easier, faster and more efficiently. Heuristic decision making may be defined as a type of principles of action which are used for taking decisions under uncertain and problematic conditions (Squire et al., 2009). They may constitute some type of an *autopilot* which reduces uncertainty in a daily activity and social interactions (Koźmiński et al., 2011).

A figure 1 presents three definition models of trust. Trust and distrust may exist simultaneously. Both elements are shaped by various factors and enter multi-depending relations. Lewicki and his team suggested that four possible scenarios of co-existence of trust and distrust including high trust, low trust, high distrust and low distrust. should be distinguished. They described the following issues in detail (Kunne, Quandt, p. 29; Lewicki et al., 2006, p. 1003):

- Low distrust and low trust – a relationship characteristic for "casual acquaintance" with a "limited interdependence" enabling "professional politeness".
- Low distrust and high trust – the best relationship of interdependence enabling "new initiatives".
- High distrust and high trust – interdependence in a relationship, divided into many segments, cooperation may be limited, big chances of cooperation development and limitation of risk appear.
- High distrust and low trust – interdependence characterized by bad motives.

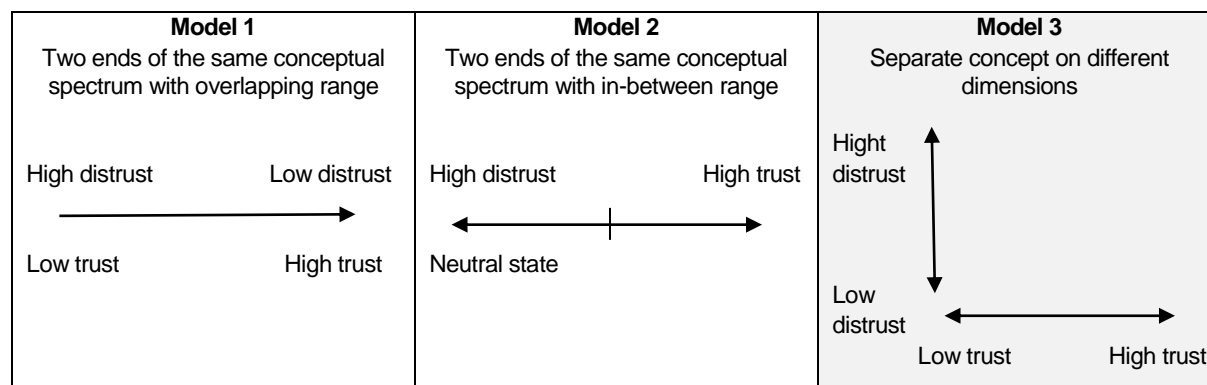


Figure 1. Three models of trust and distrust definition
Source: prepared based on: Guo S., Lumineau F., Lewicki.

The presented combinations indicate that trust and distrust are mutual and related on many planes. It enables observation of various interactions between them in various situations. However, in the Polish conditions one should make an attempt to define distrust.

A definition of distrust may start with a presentation of the concept of trust. The literature review justifies the statement that distrust is not a contrary concept (negative) to trust i.e. is not on the opposite side of the trust axis. However, approximation of the trust construct may create favourable conditions for defining distrust. Trust is a hidden belief that another entity (a trust object) will meet some expectations in the future (Baier, 1986; Lewicki et al., 1998, Pettit, 2008). Based on Baier analysis, the following definition may be abstracted i.e.: "A trusts B with C", meaning that agent A expects that agent B has sufficient ability, motivation, and integrity to satisfactorily handle a responsibility delegated to them to deal with a valued object C. As described by Baier (1986) and Pettit (2008), trust is a special case of reliance.

There is no agreement as to the distrust definition. According to the analyses carried out by teams working under the supervision of Lewicki and McKnight and Chervany, distrust is understood as a process of being careful, sceptic or with a mechanism of avoiding someone (or something, an object) due to its lack of competence, hostility or unfairness (McKnight & Chervany, 2001, Lewicki et al., 1998).

The definition of distrust has changed over the decades. A new approach to the issue of distrust may be found in the paper by Lewicki et al. (1998), *Trust and distrust: new relationships and realities*. The authors argue that trust and distrust are separate concepts. Trust is defined as a positive prediction of another's conduct. On the other hand, distrust is related to a negative prediction of the conduct of the object of trust. The term „another's conduct" is used in a very specific, but encompassing sense, corresponding to another's words, actions, and decisions (Lewicki et al., 1998, p. 438) An assumption must be made, that trust and distrust are categories concerning the future (related to the analysis of the future). Trust is related to positive expectations while distrust raises negative expectations related to fear or fears concerning the future.

Trust and distrust are separate concepts which at the same time are mutually related. A low level of distrust is not the same as a high level of trust and high distrust does not mean a low level of trust. Trust reduces social insecurity (complexity) and unpredictability, enabling avoidance of undesired conduct and facilitating taking up a decision (so that all desired conduct is perceived as certain). There are opinions according to which trust is a positive concept and distrust has negative connotations. However, distrust does not have to be treated as something contrary to trust. Distrust should be associated with caution and avoiding negative consequences of actions taken by

the objects of trust. It reduces complexity of the surrounding reality and enables perception of the undesired conduct as probable. Distrust simplifies a social world and allows an individual to move rationally in order to undertake protective action and based on the prediction of some conduct. Trust and distrust are related to specific expectations; however, trust assumes the favourable conduct of others while distrust predicts injurious (raising doubts, unfavourable) conduct and forces to actively protect oneself against such actions (Warhaw). Quoting Luhmann's statement one may say that distrust is "a positive expectation of injurious action" (Luhmann, 1979, p. 72). It is sometimes regarded as identical to non-cooperative conduct being in opposition to trust which is related to cooperation. However, it is more often emphasised that trust and distrust cannot be juxtaposed on one continuum (Lewicki et al., 1998; Ullman-Margalit, 2004). Lewicki et al., proved that trust and distrust are separate concepts (constructs) for three reasons: trust and distrust may coexist (exist at the same time), they are shaped in various conditions (antecedence is different), they have different consequences. The indicated arguments show that the concept of trust and distrust should be separately analysed. Moreover, it should be indicated that human relations are multi-dimensional in nature. One

may experience trust and distrust in the same relationship at the same time. "Like a feeling that one person attracts us as well as repulses us, that we like someone and do not like them, love and hate, it is also possible to trust and distrust other people" (Lewicki et al., 1998, p. 449). It is proper to look at a particular relationship through a prism of trust and distrust. It may evolve that in some areas the parties to the relationship trust each other and in different areas distrust (Mesquita). The parties to the relationship may purposefully nurture trust and distrust at the same time to have an opportunity to derive favours from both mechanisms simultaneously.

Trust focuses on positive emotional reactions (i.e. hope, certainty). Contrary, distrust is based on negative emotions (suspicion, care, fear). Trust and distrust altogether simplify decision processes. Trust reduces complexity, forcing a person to undertake actions which expose them to risk. Distrust reduces complexity, forcing a person to undertake protective actions to reduce risk (Lewicki et al.) In the literature we may find papers pertaining to the relation of existence (co-existence) of trust and distrust concepts (Lewicki et al.). Figure 2 presents the model of co-existence of trust and distrust prepared by Lewicki's team.

High Trust Characterized by Hope Faith Confidence Assurance Initiative	<i>High-value congruence Interdependence promoted Opportunities pursued New initiatives</i>	<i>Trust but verify – control is important Relationships highly segmented and bounded Opportunities pursued and down-side risks / vulnerabilities continually monitored</i>
Low Trust Characterized by No hope No faith No confidence Passivity Hesitance	<i>Casual acquaintances Limited interdependence Bounded, arms-length transactions Professional courtesy</i>	<i>Undesirable eventualities expected and feared Harmful motives assumed Interdependence managed Preemption; best offense is a good defense Paranoia</i>
	Low Distrust Characterized by No fear Absence of skepticism Absence of cynicism Low monitoring No vigilance	High Distrust Characterized by Fear Skepticism Cynicism Wariness and watchfulness Vigilance

Figure 2. Co-operating Trust and Distrust by Lewicki et.al.
Source: Lewicki et.al. (1998, p. 445).

Relationships between citizens and public entities may be shaped simultaneously by trust and distrust. Trust may occur in some areas, and distrust – in others. It is important to be aware of distrust, its reasons and determinants. Sometimes distrust may have a positive effect in the form of avoiding the negative consequences of entering a particular relationship or thorough assessment of the social interaction outcome. It is important to be aware of distrust, its reasons and the consequences of its existence.

Distrust and mistrust may be defined as a “belief that a person’s values or motives will lead them to approach all situations in an unacceptable manner” (Sitkin, Roth, p.373), as an expectation “*of punishments from Other ...rather than rewards*” (Scanzoni, p.77), or as a *choice to avoid a risky, ambiguous path*” (McKnight, et.al). According to McKnight, distrust is related to being careful, sceptical or avoiding contact with a particular person due to incompetence, hostility or/and unfairness attributed to them. (Washaw, p.14) Distrust is important not only because it enables avoiding negative consequences but also because it is more and more common towards other people and institutions. It is believed that distrust may replace trust to some extent as a social mechanism of coping with risk.

A disposition to distrust is related to a mental subjective relationship with another party. It is a general inclination of distrust towards others in various situations. McKnight and Chervany distinguish two elements of a disposition to trust, i.e. suspicion of humanity and distrusting stance. Suspicion is related to the belief that others are usually distrustful, malicious and incompetent. Distrustful attitudes are related to the belief, regardless of the suspicions, that others may disappoint with regard to the achieved results.

Another element of distinguishing distrust is an indication of features of institutions based on distrust. They are defined as objects which do not create conditions favouring the correct assessment in risky situations. It is related to institutional conditions which may limit the building of trust. Here, we may indicate no formal protection for building trust and the existence of an undefined situation (conditions) that may instigate that the intended effects are not achieved (existence of some standards and customs which create conditions for distrust).

Intentional distrust (distrustful intentions) occurs in a situation when someone does not depend on the other party or does not intend to count on the other party. A distrusting person is not certain that they can suffer the consequences of the lack of trust. Two

types of intentional distrust i.e. Unwillingness to Depend on the other party and a Subjective Probability of Not Depending.

Conduct related to distrust (based on distrust) means that a trusting person does not willingly want to depend on the other party (count on another person), being aware of the negative consequences. Distrustful actions may be related to: no cooperation, deformation of the provided information, creation of formal agreements, increase of control, not accepting influences, lack of autonomy, refraining from transactions - relationships.

Distrustful conviction (a belief that has features of distrust) is related to a belief that the other party in the relationship has features that create no basis for trust, no conditions to belief that a given result of the relationship will be achieved. Four distrustful convictions may be defined. Distrust in competences – we believe that the other party has no skills or abilities to perform what they promise. Another one is unkindness - which means that we are convinced that the other party will care only for their own interests and has no motivation to realize together the determined purpose (business). Unfairness, is the next one, which is related to the belief that the other party enters the relationship with no intention intent to keep his word, embrace the truth and fail to keep promises. The final one is unpredictability which means that actions of the other party are inconsistent and rather uncertain to predict the result of a particular relationship.

The tables below present factors that determine distrust according to McKnight et al.'s project. Table 1 presents planes of distrust analysis from the point of view of possible analysis of the investigation. Table 2 includes elements of the distrust concept due to: disposition, structure, perception, intentions and conduct.

Summing up: distrust is a conviction that the motives, intentions and conduct of the other party are serious and harmful for the interests of the party that enters the relationship. In relationships, distrust is related to the feeling of fear and prediction (expectations) of some discomfort or danger. Distrust may make us undertake actions (steps) that will decrease our susceptibility to attacks to protect our interests. Thus, our distrust towards other people (some objects) may cause a reaction contrary to cooperation which will incite and deepen the conflict. Distrust may also be related to a lower satisfaction with work, weaker involvement and motivation. One should wonder what may be the sources of formation and development of distrust so that this phenomenon

could be managed. Two types of distrust may be distinguished including distrust shaping factors, i.e. calculus-based distrust CBD) and distrust based on

the identification of needs and/or interests - identification-based distrust IBD). (Lewicki et.al., 1998)

Table 1. Interdisciplinary model of distrust definition

Distrust			
Dispositional distrust to institutions		Distrust to other people (interpersonal distrust)	
General trust/General distrust	Distrust in a particular situation or in a particular relationship	Distrust to particular objects	
Inclination to distrust Disposition to distrust	Institutions based on distrust	Distrust as a belief (no specific results, properties of the trustworthy object make it untrustworthy) Distrustful belief (distrust conviction) Intentional distrust - distrust towards specific objects as a belief in bad intentions (bad intentions) No readiness to depend on the other party and a subjective lack of dependence	Conduct related to distrust

Source: based on Interdisciplinary model of trust constructs in: D. McKnight, N. Chervany (2001).

Table 2. Levels of the distrust concept based on the model of H.McKnight and N.I.Chervany

	Disposition	Structure	Perception/Receipt	Intentions	Conduct
The level of concept Plane of analysis	Disposition to distrust (inclination to distrust)	Institutions based on distrust	Distrustful conviction (distrustful belief)	Distrustful intentions (Intentional distrust)	Conducts based on distrust
Operational level	Suspicion towards people	No structural protection (no formal protection for building trust)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-competence • Unfriendliness • Unfairness • Unpredictable character 	Unwillingness to depend on the other party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no cooperation, • distortion of the provided information, • creation of formal agreements, • increase of control, • not acceptance of influence, • lack of autonomy, • refraining from transactions-relations
Analysis of determinants	Distrustful conducts	No situational normality (existence of some standards and customs which create conditions to distrust)		Subjective lack of dependence on the other party	

Source: base on Interdisciplinary model of trust constructs in: D. McKnight, N. Chervany (2001).

Calculus-based distrust is related to negative expectations concerning another's conduct. This distrust is a type of economic calculation. It is underlain by a negative outcome of the calculation concerning building and maintaining relationships in comparison to the costs of its termination or maintenance. It is expected that the total costs of maintaining trust prevail over advantages from the given trust. We expect that with every meeting with another party in the relationship, the costs will prevail over the advantages from the trust. Distrust based on identifica-

tion of needs and interests occurs when parties in the relationship are not able to understand their needs to such a degree that there is no identification of needs (interests) of the other party with personal needs (interests). It causes negative expectations from the other party in the relationship which is based on a different assessment of values, various or competitive objectives of operation, or/and negative emotions. In this case we expect that we have nothing in common with the other party and that with engagement in relations the other party will want to

obtain advantages at the expense of our involvement. Assuming different objectives and values by the parties to the relationship may be a manifestation. Distrust based on identification is a negative expectation concerning the other party's conduct resulting from conviction on differences of values, various interests and negative emotions. (Lewicki, 2006).

Nowadays, the public sector faces several challenges, and in order to meet them some changes should be implemented. These also include changing the attitude towards transparency and trust as they are the main problems for public administration and its stakeholders. Implementing new models of

public management allows changing some methods and attitudes toward trust and distrust within the public sector, however, discussions on co-existence and mutual influence of trust and distrust in the public sector are still going on. With the use of Hood's study, four forms may be distinguished - structures of trust and distrust occurrence with regard to the public sector (Hood). Table 3 below presents four combinations of trust and distrust (social realities of trust and distrust). Based on the co-existence of trust and distrust four organizational structures may be indicated in the public sector, i.e. the fatalist way, the hierarchist way, the individualist way and egalitarian way (Bouckaert, Oomsels, p. 18).

Table 3. Consolidate matrix of administrative trust and distrust

	Distrust high Trust low	Distrust low Trust low	Distrust high Trust high	Distrust low Trust high
Intended trust: Willingness to be vulnerable	Deterrence based: deterrence of negative behaviour	Institution-based: quality and deployment of institutions	Calculus-based: institutions, trustworthiness, and decision calculus	Relation-based: trustworthiness
Behavioural trust: Observable risk, talking behaviour	Cooperation: Avoided Information: No sharing	Cooperation: When required Information: Only circulation when required, no aim	Cooperation: When utile Information: Strategic circulation + information hoarding, aimed at decision calculus	Cooperation: generally sought Information: Information sharing, aimed at double and single loop learning
Institutional structure	fatalist	hierarchist	individualist	egalitarian

Source: Oomsels, Bouckaert, p.18.

The fatalist public management is related to a high level of distrust and a low level of trust. The hierarchical public management places great pressure on roles, rules and procedures. Authorities usually focus on the determination of objectives, formulation of rules, allocation of tasks and controlling performance of tasks. Neither trust nor distrust is used to cope with the variability of social systems. This type of management is a functional alternative to trust and distrust between various objects. The individual public management is reflected in the New Public Management idea and functions at a high level of distrust and trust. The egalitarian public management is closely related to the New Public Governance logic and is defined with low distrust and high trust. The egalitarian public management focuses on the increase of participation and cooperation and aims at the limitation of control. According to the authors of the mentioned co-existence forms, the last

model is the most desired in social reality of high trust and low distrust.

According to Bouckaert and Oomsels trust can bring profit in particular cases, however, if it is misplaced, it can lead to too high costs, that are equal to high risk. Distrust can be understood as a way to avoid risk, and thereby also its potential costs and profits through the creation of control and avoiding cooperation. Thus, trust and distrust can be considered with risk acceptance because of potential gains but unpredictable costs. This may lead to the conclusion that distrust produces a predictable and regular aggregate of lost opportunities, creating opportunity costs of foregone sustained cooperation (Hardin, 2002; Bouckaert, Oomsels, 2012, p. 7). According to the abovementioned Authors, the role of trust in public administration is crucial from the point of view of low-cost effectiveness, which is highly desired in management in public administration.

Conclusions

The objective of the article was to prepare a theoretical basis for the studies on distrust in the Polish public sector, thus it reviews the literature concerning interdependence between trust and distrust. Trust and distrust may exist simultaneously and the concepts of trust and distrust were separated and a definition of trust was presented. Arguments confirming that distrust should not be treated as a negation of trust (a contrary concept) but as a separate concept that requires analysis were presented. It is difficult to build trust in the distrustful Polish society without recognition of the conditions of its existence. Recognition of distrust may become a basis for building trust towards public entities. Trust and distrust allow the society to cope with different social systems. Distrust simplifies a social world enabling an individual to rationally move in order to undertake protective action and based on the prediction of some action. Trust and distrust are related to specific expectations; however, trust assumes the favourable conduct of others while distrust predicts injurious (raising doubts, unfavourable) conduct and forces one to actively protect oneself against such action. Distrust does not have to be treated as a negative concept. It may be also analysed as a strategy of avoiding or counteracting negative results of cooperation between various objects (e.g. between citizens and public entities).

Separation of distrust analysis areas due to: disposition, structure, perception, intentions and conduct may be a basis for further studies. Public entities should aim at building a high level of trust and a low level of distrust through the use of the egalitarian strategy of public management.

Studies on distrust (analysis) in the public sector should be extended. The culture of distrust may be an obstacle to building trust towards public entities. Maybe it would be worth talking about preventing distrust, the culture of distrust than about building trust. Knowing the essence of distrust towards public entities may be a basis for building trust towards them.

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